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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003771

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USNATO PASS TO ALEX BAEZ

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/13/2017  
TAGS: [IZ](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [PREL](#)  
SUBJECT: EXPANDING TAILORED NATO-IRAQ COOPERATION

REF: A. A. USNATO 592

[1](#)B. B. USNATO 596

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Classified By: Ambassador Ryan Crocker for reasons 1.4 (a) and (d)

[1](#)1. (S) Summary: USNATO forwarded an Italian non-paper (ref A) for Embassy Baghdad and Department consideration about the future role of the NATO Training Mission - Iraq (NTM-I) in a post-UNSCR environment. NTM-I fills a critical niche in the training and mentoring of mid-level leadership of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and Embassy Baghdad concurs that the training mission should be continued and expanded in 2009 to include advisory and mentoring elements at the strategic level. Regarding the political basis for its continuation without a UNSCR, Embassy Baghdad does not assess the need for a comprehensive Afghanistan-like security agreement; rather, it would be more appropriate to negotiate a limited partnership based on NTM-I and possibly moving towards inclusion in the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI). We concur that a visit by Prime Minister Maliki to NATO would be helpful in developing an expanding role for the Alliance in Iraq. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (S) Embassy Baghdad appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Italian non-paper on expanding cooperation between NATO and Iraq as well as subsequent implementation proposals by USNATO. The non-paper raises three fundamental issues for consideration: effectiveness of the NTM-I, its future role beyond 2008, and the political basis for its continuation beyond the UNSCR 1723.

NTM-I Effectiveness

[1](#)3. (S) According to NATO Training Mission in Iraq (NTM-I) Commanding General Dubik, the rapid expansion of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) placed greatest demand on development of a mid-level management cadre. We assess NTM-I as an essential element in reducing this deficit among the multitude of training programs provided to the ISF. An important NTM-I success story is the transformation of the Ar-Rustamaya (AR) Military Academy which focused on national-level, officer leadership training. Reaching Full Operational Capability (FOC) in July, NTM-I's mentorship initiative at AR filled a critical niche not covered by other training programs. The same holds true for the Italian-led

gendarmerie training which began in October; it is a unique program--not offered by any other source--intended to provide Iraqi National Police with key civil-military leadership skills necessary in this hostile security environment. Though small in number, these leadership programs have an enormous positive impact on the future of the ISF.

#### NTM-I Expansion

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¶4. We concur with General Dubik's focus in the current Program Management Review (PMR) on developing programs in the near term focused on officer and non-commissioned officer professional development as well as building a robust training and doctrine command. For future expansion in 2009, we assess the Italian non-paper as right-on-target with its suggestions to extend NTM-I's training activities to include the Iraqi Navy and Air Force as well as broader strategic-level management training in logistics, administration, and defense procurement. This is a straight-forward "next step" which builds on already existing NATO elements here in Iraq.

#### Political Basis for Continuation of NATO Missions in Iraq

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¶5. (S) These new training initiatives come at a critical time for the GOI as it closely examines its future security relationships, especially renewal of UNSCR 1723. Based on discussions with senior Iraqi leaders, we do not expect the GOI to request UNSCR renewal beyond 2008. As the Alliance based its decision to launch NTM-I on UN Security Council resolutions that may not apply beyond 2008, it is appropriate to examine the political basis by which the Alliance will continue to operate in Iraq (Ref B). Along these lines, the Italian non-paper and USNATO response (Ref A) suggest two different frameworks for continued operations: either a

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structured security cooperation agreement with NATO, similar to that with Afghanistan, or a partnership program under the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI). We do not believe either is the right fit for Iraq at this time.

¶6. (S) The first case, an Afghanistan-like agreement, does not seem appropriate for Iraq in scope, purpose, or timing. NTM-I and its 160-person "training-only" detachment is considerably smaller than the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, which numbers over 40,000 personnel and conducts both kinetic and non-kinetic operations. Additionally, the time and effort required to secure this agreement would come at a difficult juncture for Iraq since lengthy and complicated discussions on Status of Forces arrangements with the Coalition Forces will commence in January. Introducing another complex agreement to the GOI during this same timeframe may overtax Iraq's limited capacity.

¶7. (S) The second case, an ICI partnership, comes closer in scope and purpose to GOI requirements but with the same timing issues noted in paragraph 6. An ICI partnership program offers an attractive menu of bilateral activities which would be useful for the ISF, but many of these are similar to programs already underway with NTM-I or which could be undertaken under its current auspices. We would prefer to build on an already successful NTM-I unless it proves impossible to develop the political consensus within the Alliance for continuation beyond 2008. In that case, an ICI partnership is preferable to no Alliance program at all. We defer to Embassy Riyadh about political implications for Saudi Arabia concerning Iraqi ICI membership (ref A).

¶8. (S) For the near term, Embassy Baghdad suggests a middle road between these two alternatives. We believe the most appropriate way-ahead is expansion of the NTM-I mission initially along the lines of the Italian non-paper, but with

increasing expansion toward activities conducted under the ICI. This transition period would maintain the basic structure of NTM-I but would expand some of its activities beyond the current "training-only" limitation. We defer to USNATO, but this type of limited partnership that builds on already existing NTM-I structures would not require approval at the April summit; rather, it could be postponed for consideration by the NAC in the fall.

Maliki Visit to NATO

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19. (S) Post concurs that a visit by Prime Minister Maliki to NATO would be helpful in developing an expanding role for the Alliance in Iraq.  
CROCKER